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**For Immediate Release****FCC TO PROVIDE OPEN SOURCE ACCESSIBILITY PLATFORM  
TO HELP FEDERAL AGENCIES, BUSINESSES INCREASE DIRECT  
COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES*****Commission to Offer Open Source Video Access Platform  
to Increase Adoption of Direct Communications Access***

WASHINGTON, August 20, 2015 – FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler today announced that the agency will offer an open source video access platform that will enable Americans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or who have a speech disability to communicate directly with federal agencies and businesses in American Sign Language (ASL).

“It is time for people who speak with their hands and hear with their eyes to enjoy modern advancements in communications technologies,” said Chairman Wheeler at a speech today at the TDI Conference in Baltimore. “It’s time for you to be able to have your video products work together, so you can call whomever you wish, whenever you wish, from anywhere. The platform we are launching has tremendous potential to ensure that you will be able to do this.”

The platform will provide open source applications for mobile and desktop operating systems which – along with direct video calling – will allow for text and high-quality voice communications. In addition, the FCC will provide applications that relay service users can download on their smartphones or desktops in order to communicate directly with agency representatives. An ASL-user will be able to click on who they want to talk to and the call will be connected directly to a customer service center staffed by, most commonly, another person who is deaf or hard of hearing who is fluent in ASL. The Commission plans to roll out a beta version later this year with final release schedule for spring of 2016.

The FCC’s platform will provide the basic building blocks that are common to any IP-based application. The platform also will establish a set of interoperability standards to be used by today’s two-way video communications providers, ensuring seamless usability while maintaining freedom of choice for all ASL users. Giving applications developers open access to source code will enable them to provide apps with easy interoperability for those receiving calls.

Today’s announcement builds upon the FCC’s efforts to be accessible to consumers with disabilities. The FCC was the first federal agency to use interactive video to allow deaf and hard of hearing callers direct access to ASL consumer support. The FCC has also promoted the use of direct video communication across federal, state and local government agencies and to businesses. As a result, the Small Business Administration has begun providing this access, and

the Census Bureau, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the City of New York each announced that they will begin utilizing this practice.

In addition to the government agency implementation of these programs, companies including Microsoft Inc. and Verizon Communications are providing accessible direct access to their customer support services using their own platforms. Once operational, the FCC's open source accessibility platform will provide other public and private entities further opportunities to offer these services.

During his tenure, Chairman Wheeler has made communications accessibility issues a priority. Since November 2013, the Commission has proposed rules to make its deaf-blind equipment distribution program [permanent](#), prioritized [text-to-911](#) availability, improved [accessibility](#) of emergency information on "second screen" devices, [adopted](#) closed captioning quality standards, [established](#) a Disability Advisory Committee, and sought to [highlight](#) the need for more video-described programming.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*